

EYEGASSES - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

It is normal to have questions about obtaining a prescription for eyeglasses from your optometrist or ophthalmologist. Answers to some common questions are provided below.

WHAT IS AN EYEGLOSS PRESCRIPTION?

An eyeglass prescription authorizes a licensed dispenser to provide eyeglasses to you. An eyeglass prescription can be issued only by an optometrist or a physician, who may be an ophthalmologist. In Ontario, only optometrists, physicians and opticians are authorized to sell prescription eyeglasses.

For more information about the differences between an optometrist, an ophthalmologist and an optician, please visit: <http://www.collegeoptom.on.ca/index.php/public/patient-faqs#a>

Your prescription is based upon the analysis of the information obtained from your eye examination. To determine how your vision can be corrected, the optometrist will consider:

- Your health history and daily visual demands
- how your eyes work together
- the health of your eyes
- the lenses required to bring your eyes into the best possible focus for you

Eyeglass prescriptions may vary from time to time and from measurement to measurement. Small variations in the prescription are normal and may not affect the way you see.

WHAT IS THE PD (PUPILLARY DISTANCE)?

Pupillary distance, or PD, measures the distance between your pupils. An accurately taken PD is one of many measurements needed to ensure that when the eyeglasses are manufactured, the prescription lenses are appropriately centered in a frame in front of your eyes. The PD measurement is not a required component of an eyeglass prescription, nor is it required clinical information that must be gathered as part of the eye examination.

DOES MY OPTOMETRIST HAVE TO INCLUDE THIS MEASUREMENT IN MY EYEGLOSS PRESCRIPTION?

No, your optometrist does not need to include this measurement in your eyeglass prescription.

Instead, the measurement of your PD is a component of the dispensing services and is measured by the licensed dispenser when the eyeglasses are ordered.



ARE THERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AN EYEGGLASS PRESCRIPTION AND A CONTACT LENS PRESCRIPTION?

An eyeglass prescription provides the basis for a contact lens prescription. The power in an eyeglass prescription may be different from what is specified for contact lenses, because contact lenses are worn directly on the eye and eyeglasses are worn in front of the eye. For information about contact lens fitting and prescription, please visit: www.collegeoptom.on.ca/images/pdfs/ContactLensAdvisory.pdf

DOES MY EYEGGLASS PRESCRIPTION HAVE AN EXPIRY DATE?

If your eyesight is likely to significantly change over time, your optometrist may recommend your prescription not be filled after a particular date.

A number of factors may cause your prescription to change; these include: eye growth, aging and certain medical or eye conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, dry eye, thyroid conditions, cataracts, retinal detachments, corneal disease, eye lid abnormalities, or contact lens wear (especially if improperly fitted).

WILL MY OPTOMETRIST AUTOMATICALLY GIVE ME A COPY OF THE PRESCRIPTION OR MUST I ASK FOR IT?

Your optometrist must provide you with a copy of your prescription, once finalized, and if your eye examination is paid in full.

ARE THERE INSTANCES WHEN MY OPTOMETRIST WILL NOT ISSUE MY EYEGGLASS PRESCRIPTION?

In some circumstances, your optometrist may not be able to provide you with your eyeglass prescription – for example, if you have unstable health conditions causing fluctuations in your vision and your prescription. These conditions might include diabetes, cataracts, retinal detachments, macular degeneration, eye injuries (such as corneal abrasion or foreign body in the eye), infections, etc. A prescription may be issued after your vision stabilizes.

If there is an unpaid balance on your account for the eye examination, the optometrist may withhold your prescription until the account has been paid.



WHAT INFORMATION MUST BE INCLUDED IN MY EYEGGLASS PRESCRIPTION?

Your prescription must include:

- the prescriber's name, practice address, telephone number and signature
- your name
- date of eye examination
- enough information to enable a licensed dispenser to dispense your eyeglasses.

The parameters specified in an eyeglass prescription may vary. Typically, a prescription includes the power of each lens in order to correct your vision due to nearsightedness (myopia), farsightedness (hyperopia), astigmatism or age-related need for reading glasses (presbyopia).

Sometimes, an eyeglass prescription may include other elements, such as reading addition, prismatic power, bicentric prism or vertex distance of the refraction. If you have astigmatism, the sphere, cylinder and axis are indicated on the prescription.

WHERE MAY I FILL MY EYEGGLASS PRESCRIPTION?

You have the right to fill your eyeglass prescription at any licensed dispenser you choose.

It is recommended that you fill your prescription at your optometrist, physician or optician's office. In Ontario, only these regulated health professionals are legally authorized to dispense eyeglasses, contact lenses and subnormal vision devices for vision or eye problems, under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

SHOULD I BUY MY EYEGGLASSES ON THE INTERNET?

The College of Optometrists of Ontario is deeply concerned that a significant risk of harm is posed when prescription eyeglasses and contact lenses are dispensed by unregulated Internet-based businesses, without the involvement of a licensed dispenser. Purchasing eyeglasses on the Internet is not regulated, and you are not protected by a regulated environment, professional accountability and standards.

Prescription eyeglasses are highly individualized. If your eyeglasses are not appropriately and accurately made, your vision can be significantly compromised. If you purchase eyeglasses online, no trained and accountable licensed dispenser is obligated to inspect your eyeglasses for accuracy, adjust them to your face or answer your questions or concerns. In fact, selling prescription eyeglasses by any unlicensed entity (including the Internet) is illegal in Ontario.